

Ayn Rand

The Comprachicos

I

The comprachicos, or comprapequeños, were a strange and hideous nomadic association, famous in the seventeenth century, forgotten in the eighteenth, unknown today ...

Comprachicos, as well as comprapequeños, is a compound Spanish word that means “child-buyers.” The comprachicos traded in children. They bought them and sold them.

They did not steal them. The kidnapping of children is a different industry.

And what did they make of these children?

Monsters.

Why monsters?

To laugh.

The people need laughter; so do the kings. Cities require side-show freaks or clowns; palaces require jesters ...

To succeed in producing a freak, one must get hold of him early. A dwarf must be started when he is small ...

Hence, an art. There were educators. They took a man and turned him into a miscarriage; they took a face and made a muzzle. They stunted growth; they mangled features. This artificial production of teratological cases had its own rules. It was a whole science. Imagine an inverted orthopedics. Where God had put a straight glance, this art put a squint. Where God had put harmony, they put deformity. Where God had put perfection, they brought back a botched attempt. And, in the eyes of connoisseurs, it is the botched that was perfect ...

The practice of degrading man leads one to the practice of deforming him. Deformity completes the task of political suppression ...

The comprachicos had a talent, to disfigure, that made them valuable in politics. To disfigure is better than to kill. There was the iron mask, but that is an awkward means. One cannot populate Europe with iron masks; deformed mountebanks, however, run through the streets without appearing implausible; besides, an iron mask can be torn off, a mask of flesh cannot. To mask you forever by means of your own face, nothing can be more ingenious ...

The comprachicos did not merely remove a child's face, they removed his memory. At least, they removed as much of it as they could. The child was not aware of the mutilation he had suffered. This horrible surgery left traces on his face, not in his mind. He could remember at most that one day he had been seized

by some men, then had fallen asleep, and later they had cured him. Cured him of what? He did not know. Of the burning by sulphur and the incisions by iron, he remembered nothing. During the operation, the comprachicos made the little

patient unconscious by means of a stupefying powder that passed for magic and suppressed pain ...

In China, since time immemorial, they have achieved refinement in a special art and industry: the molding of a living man. One takes a child two or three years old, one puts him into a porcelain vase, more or less grotesque in shape, without cover or bottom, so that the head and feet protrude. In the daytime, one keeps this vase standing upright; at night, one lays it down, so that the child can sleep. Thus the child expands without growing, slowly filling the contours of the vase with his compressed flesh and twisted bones. This bottled development continues for several years. At a certain point, it becomes irreparable. When one judges that this has occurred and that the monster is made, one breaks the vase, the child comes out, and one has a man in the shape of a pot. (Victor Hugo, *The Man Who Laughs*, translation mine.)

Victor Hugo wrote this in the nineteenth century. His exalted mind could not conceive that so unspeakable a form of inhumanity would ever be possible again. The twentieth century proved him wrong.

The production of monsters—helpless, twisted monsters whose normal development has been stunted—goes on all around us. But the modern heirs of the comprachicos are smarter and subtler than their predecessors: they do not hide, they practice their trade in the open; they do not buy children, the children are delivered to them; they do not use sulphur or iron, they achieve their goal without ever laying a finger on their little victims.

The ancient comprachicos hid the operation, but displayed its results; their heirs have reversed the process: the operation is open, the results are invisible. In the past, this horrible surgery left traces on a child's face, not in his mind. Today, it leaves traces in his mind, not on his face. In both cases, the child is not aware of the mutilation he has suffered. But today's comprachicos do not use narcotic powders: they take a child before he is fully aware of reality and never let him develop that awareness. Where nature had put a normal brain, they put mental retardation. To make you unconscious for life by means of your own brain, nothing can be more ingenious.

This is the ingenuity practiced by most of today's educators. They are the comprachicos of the mind.

They do not place a child into a vase to adjust his body to its contours. They place him into a "Progressive" nursery school to adjust him to society.

The Progressive nursery schools start a child's education at the age of three. Their view of a child's needs is militantly anti-cognitive and anti-conceptual. A child of that age, they claim, is too young for cognitive training; his natural desire is not to learn, but to play. The development of his conceptual faculty, they claim, is an unnatural burden that should not be imposed on him; he should be free to act on his spontaneous urges and feelings in order to express his subconscious desires, hostilities and fears. The primary goal of a Progressive nursery school is "social adjustment"; this is to be achieved by means of group activities, in which a child is expected to develop both "self-expression" (in the form of anything he might feel like doing) and conformity to the group.

(For a presentation of the essentials of the Progressive nursery schools' theories and practice—as contrasted to the rationality of the Montessori nursery schools—I refer you to "The Montessori Method" by Beatrice Hessen in *The Objectivist*, May-July 1970.)

"Give me a child for the first seven years," says a famous maxim attributed to the Jesuits, "and you may do what you like with him afterwards." This is true of most children, with rare,

heroically independent exceptions. The first five or six years of a child's life are crucial to his cognitive development. They determine, not the content of his mind, but its method of functioning, its psycho-epistemology. (Psycho-epistemology is the study of man's cognitive processes from the aspect of the interaction between man's conscious mind and the automatic functions of his subconscious.)

At birth, a child's mind is *tabula rasa*; he has the potential of awareness—the mechanism of a human consciousness—but no content. Speaking metaphorically, he has a camera with an extremely sensitive, unexposed film (his conscious mind), and an extremely complex computer waiting to be programmed (his subconscious). Both are blank. He knows nothing of the external world. He faces an immense chaos which he must learn to perceive by means of the complex mechanism which he must learn to operate.

If, in any two years of adult life, men could learn as much as an infant learns in his first two years, they would have the capacity of genius. To focus his eyes (which is not an innate, but an acquired skill), to perceive the things around him by integrating his sensations into percepts (which is not an innate, but an acquired skill), to coordinate his muscles for the task of crawling, then standing upright, then walking—and, ultimately, to grasp the process of concept-formation and learn to speak—these are some of an infant's tasks and achievements whose magnitude is not equaled by most men in the rest of their lives.

These achievements are not conscious and volitional in the adult sense of the terms: an infant is not aware, in advance, of the processes he has to perform in order to acquire these skills, and the processes are largely automatic. But they are acquired skills, nevertheless, and the enormous effort expended by an infant to acquire them can be easily observed. Observe also the intensity, the austere, the unsmiling seriousness with which an infant watches the world around him. (If you ever find, in an adult, that degree of seriousness about reality, you will have found a great man.)

A child's cognitive development is not completed by the time he is three years old—it is just about to begin in the full, human, conceptual sense of the term. He has merely traveled through the anteroom of cognition and acquired the prerequisites of knowledge, the rudimentary mental tools he needs to begin to learn. His mind is in a state of eager, impatient flux: he is unable to catch up with the impressions bombarding him from all sides; he wants to know everything and at once. After the gigantic effort to acquire his mental tools, he has an overwhelming need to use them.

For him, the world has just begun. It is an intelligible world now; the chaos is in his mind, which he has not yet learned to organize—this is his next, conceptual task. His every experience is a discovery; every impression it leaves in his mind is new. But he is not able to think in such terms: to him, it is the world that's new. What Columbus felt when he landed in America, what the astronauts felt when they landed on the moon, is what a child feels when he discovers the earth, between the ages of two and seven. (Do you think that Columbus' first desire was to “adjust” to the natives—or that the astronauts' first wish was to engage in fantasy play?)

This is a child's position at about the age of three. The next three or four years determine the brightness or the misery of his future: they program the cognitive functions of his subconscious computer.

The subconscious is an integrating mechanism. Man's conscious mind observes and establishes connections among his experiences; the subconscious integrates the connections and makes them become automatic. For example, the skill of walking is acquired, after many faltering attempts, by the automatization of countless connections controlling muscular movements; once he learns to walk, a child needs no conscious awareness of such problems as

posture, balance, length of step, etc.— the mere decision to walk brings the integrated total into his control.

A mind's cognitive development involves a continual process of automatization. For example, you cannot perceive a table as an infant perceives it—as a mysterious object with four legs. You perceive it as a table, i.e., a man-made piece of furniture, serving a certain purpose belonging to a human habitation, etc.; you cannot separate these attributes from your sight of the table, you experience it as a single, indivisible percept—yet all you see is a four-legged object; the rest is an automatized integration of a vast amount of conceptual knowledge which, at one time, you had to learn bit by bit. The same is true of everything you perceive or experience; as an adult, you cannot perceive or experience in a vacuum, you do it in a certain automatized context—and the efficiency of your mental operations depends on the kind of context your subconscious has automatized.

“Learning to speak is a process of automatizing the use (i.e., the meaning and the application) of concepts. And more: all learning involves a process of automatizing, i.e., of first acquiring knowledge by fully conscious, focused attention and observation, then of establishing mental connections which make that knowledge automatic (instantly available as a context), thus freeing man's mind to pursue further, more complex knowledge.” (Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology.)

The process of forming, integrating and using concepts is not an automatic, but a volitional process—i.e., a process which uses both new and automatized material, but which is directed volitionally. It is not an innate, but an acquired skill; it has to be learned—it is the most crucially important part of learning—and all of man's other capacities depend on how well or how badly he learns it.

This skill does not pertain to the particular content of a man's knowledge at any given age, but to the method by which he acquires and organizes knowledge—the method by which his mind deals with its content. The method programs his subconscious computer, determining how efficiently, lamely or disastrously his cognitive processes will function. The programming of a man's subconscious consists of the kind of cognitive habits he acquires; these habits constitute his psycho-epistemology.

It is a child's early experiences, observations and subverbal conclusions that determine this programming. Thereafter, the interaction of content and method establishes a certain reciprocity: the method of acquiring knowledge affects its content, which affects the further development of the method, and so on.

In the flux of a child's countless impressions and momentary conclusions, the crucial ones are those that pertain to the nature of the world around him, and to the efficacy of his mental efforts. The words that would name the essence of the long, wordless process taking place in a child's mind are two questions: Where am I?— and: Is it worth it?

The child's answers are not set in words: they are set in the form of certain reactions which become habitual, i.e., automatized. He does not conclude that the universe is “benevolent” and that thinking is important—he develops an eager curiosity about every new experience, and a desire to understand it. Subconsciously, in terms of automatized mental processes, he develops the implicit equivalent of two fundamental premises, which are the cornerstones of his future sense of life, i.e., of his metaphysics and epistemology long before he is able to grasp such concepts consciously.

Does a child conclude that the world is intelligible, and proceed to expand his understanding by the effort of conceptualizing on an ever-wider scale, with growing success and enjoyment? Or does he conclude that the world is a bewildering chaos, where the fact he

grasped today is reversed tomorrow, where the more he sees the more helpless he becomes—and, consequently, does he retreat into the cellar of his own mind, locking its door? Does a child reach the stage of self-consciousness, i.e., does he grasp the distinction between consciousness and existence, between his mind and the outside world, which leads him to understand that the task of the first is to perceive the second, which leads to the development of his critical faculty and of control over his mental operations? Or does he remain in an indeterminate daze, never certain of whether he feels or perceives, of where one ends and the other begins, which leads him to feel trapped between two unintelligible states of flux: the chaos within and without? Does a child learn to identify, to categorize, to integrate his experiences and thus acquire the self-confidence needed to develop a long-range vision? Or does he learn to see nothing but the immediate moment and the feelings it produces, never venturing to look beyond it, never establishing any context but an emotional one, which leads him eventually to a stage where, under the pressure of any strong emotion, his mind disintegrates and reality vanishes?

These are the kinds of issues and answers that program a child's mind in the first years of his life, as his subconscious automatizes one set of cognitive—psycho-epistemological—habits or the other, or a continuum of degrees of precarious mixtures between the two extremes.

The ultimate result is that by the age of about seven, a child acquires the capacity to develop a vast conceptual context which will accompany and illuminate his every experience, creating an ever-growing chain of automatized connections, expanding the power of his intelligence with every year of his life—or a child shrivels as his mind shrinks, leaving only a nameless anxiety in the vacuum that should have been filled by his growing brain.

Intelligence is the ability to deal with a broad range of abstractions. Whatever a child's natural endowment, the use of intelligence is an acquired skill. It has to be acquired by a child's own effort and automatized by his own mind, but adults can help or hinder him in this crucial process. They can place him in an environment that provides him with evidence of a stable, consistent, intelligible world which challenges and rewards his efforts to understand—or in an environment where nothing connects to anything, nothing holds long enough to grasp, nothing is answered, nothing is certain, where the incomprehensible and unpredictable lurks behind every corner and strikes him at any random step. The adults can accelerate or hamper, retard and, perhaps, destroy the development of his conceptual faculty.

Dr. Montessori's *Own Handbook* indicates the nature and extent of the help that a child needs at the time he enters nursery school. He has learned to identify objects; he has not learned to abstract attributes, i.e., consciously to identify things such as height, weight, color or number. He has barely acquired the ability to speak; he is not yet able to grasp the nature of this, to him, amazing skill, and he needs training in its proper use (i.e., training in conceptualization). It is psycho-epistemological training that Dr. Montessori had in mind (though this is not her term), when she wrote the following about her method:

“The didactic material, in fact, does not offer to the child the ‘content’ of the mind, but the order for that ‘content.’... The mind has formed itself by a special exercise of attention, observing, comparing, and classifying.

“The mental attitude acquired by such an exercise leads the child to make ordered observations in his environment, observations which prove as interesting to him as

discoveries, and so stimulate him to multiply them indefinitely and to form in his mind a rich ‘content’ of clear ideas.

“Language now comes to fix by means of exact words the ideas which the mind has acquired In this way the children are able to ‘find themselves,’ alike in the world of natural things and in the world of objects and of words which surround them, for they have an inner guide which leads them to become active and intelligent explorers instead of wandering wayfarers in an unknown land.” (Maria Montessori, *Dr. Montessori’s Own Handbook*, New York, Schocken Books, 1965, pp. 137-138.)

The purposeful, disciplined use of his intelligence is the highest achievement possible to man: it is that which makes him human. The higher the skill, the earlier in life its learning should be started. The same holds true in reverse, for those who seek to stifle a human potential. To succeed in producing the atrophy of intelligence, a state of man-made stupidity, one must get hold of the victim early; a mental dwarf must be started when he is small. This is the art and science practiced by the *comprachicos* of the mind.

At the age of three, when his mind is almost as plastic as his bones, when his need and desire to know are more intense than they will ever be again, a child is delivered —by a Progressive nursery school—into the midst of a pack of children as helplessly ignorant as himself. He is not merely left without cognitive guidance—he is actively discouraged and prevented from pursuing cognitive tasks. He wants to learn; he is told to play. Why? No answer is given. He is made to understand—by the emotional vibrations permeating the atmosphere of the place, by every crude or subtle means available to the adults whom he cannot understand—that the most important thing in this peculiar world is not to know, but to get along with the pack. Why? No answer is given.

He does not know what to do; he is told to do anything he feels like. He picks up a toy; it is snatched away from him by another child; he is told that he must learn to share. Why? No answer is given. He sits alone in a corner; he is told that he must join the others. Why? No answer is given. He approaches a group, reaches for their toys and is punched in the nose. He cries, in angry bewilderment; the teacher throws her arms around him and gushes that she loves him.

Animals, infants and small children are exceedingly sensitive to emotional vibrations: it is their chief means of cognition. A small child senses whether an adult’s emotions are genuine, and grasps instantly the vibrations of hypocrisy. The teacher’s mechanical crib-side manner—the rigid smile, the cooing tone of voice, the clutching hands, the coldly unfocused, unseeing eyes—add up in a child’s mind to a word he will soon learn: phony. He knows it is a disguise; a disguise hides something; he experiences suspicion—and fear.

A small child is mildly curious about, but not greatly interested in, other children of his own age. In daily association, they merely bewilder him. He is not seeking equals, but cognitive superiors, people who know. Observe that young children prefer the company of older children or of adults, that they hero-worship and try to emulate an older brother or sister. A child needs to reach a certain development, a sense of his own identity, before he can enjoy the company of his “peers.” But he is thrown into their midst and told to adjust.

Adjust to what? To anything. To cruelty, to injustice, to blindness, to silliness, to pretentiousness, to snubs, to mockery, to treachery, to lies, to incomprehensible demands, to unwanted favors, to nagging affections, to unprovoked hostilities—and to the overwhelming, overpowering presence of Whim as the ruler of everything. (Why these and nothing better? Because these are the protective devices of helpless, frightened, unformed children who are left without guidance and are ordered to act as a mob. The better kinds of actions require thought.)

A three-year-old delivered into the power of a pack of other three-year-olds is worse off than a fox delivered to a pack of hounds: the fox, at least, is free to run; the three-year-old is expected to court the hounds and seek their love while they tear him to pieces.

After a while, he adjusts. He gets the nature of the game—wordlessly, by repetition, imitation and emotional osmosis, long before he can form the concepts to identify it.

He learns not to question the supremacy of the pack. He discovers that such questions are taboo in some frightening, supernatural way; the answer is an incantation vibrating with the overtones of a damning indictment, suggesting that he is guilty of some innate, incorrigible evil: “Don’t be selfish.” Thus he acquires self-doubt, before he is fully aware of a self.

He learns that regardless of what he does—whether his action is right or wrong, honest or dishonest, sensible or senseless—if the pack disapproves, he is wrong and his desire is frustrated; if the pack approves, then anything goes. Thus the embryo of his concept of morality shrivels before it is born.

He learns that it is no use starting any lengthy project of his own—such as building a castle out of boxes—it will be taken over or destroyed by others. He learns that anything he wants must be grabbed today, since there is no way of telling what the pack will decide tomorrow. Thus his groping sense of time-continuity—of the future’s reality—is stunted, shrinking his awareness and concern to the range of the immediate moment. He is able (and motivated) to perceive the present; he is unable (and unmotivated) to retain the past or to project the future.

But even the present is undercut. Make-believe is a dangerous luxury, which only those who have grasped the distinction between the real and the imaginary can afford. Cut off from reality, which he has not learned fully to grasp, he is plunged into a world of fantasy playing. He may feel a dim uneasiness, at first: to him, it is not imagining, it is lying. But he loses that distinction and gets into the swing. The wilder his fantasies, the warmer the teacher’s approval and concern; his doubts are intangible, the approval is real. He begins to believe his own fantasies. How can he be sure of what is true or not, what is out there and what is only in his mind? Thus he never acquires a firm distinction between existence and consciousness: his precarious hold on reality is shaken, and his cognitive processes subverted.

His desire to know dies slowly; it is not killed—it is diluted and swims away. Why bother facing problems if they can be solved by make-believe? Why struggle to discover the world if you can make it become whatever you wish—by wishing?

His trouble is that the wishing also seems to fade. He has nothing left to guide him, except his feelings, but he is afraid to feel. The teacher prods him to self-expression, but he knows that this is a trap: he is being put on trial before the pack, to see whether he fits or not. He senses that he is constantly expected to feel, but he does not feel anything—only fear, confusion, helplessness and boredom. He senses that these must not be expressed, that there is something wrong with him if he has such feelings—since none of the other children seem to have them. (That they are all going through the same process, is way beyond his capacity to understand.) They seem to be at home—he is the only freak and outcast.

So he learns to hide his feelings, to simulate them, to pretend, to evade—to repress. The stronger his fear, the more aggressive his behavior; the more uncertain his assertions, the louder his voice. From playacting, he progresses easily to the skill of putting on an act. He does so with the dim intention of protecting himself, on the wordless conclusion that the pack will not hurt him if it never discovers what he feels. He has neither the means nor the courage to grasp that it is not his bad feelings, but the good ones, that he wants to protect from the

pack: his feelings about anything important to him, about anything he loves—i.e., the first, vague rudiments of his values.

He succeeds so well at hiding his feelings and values from others that he hides them also from himself. His subconscious automatizes his act—he gives it nothing else to automatize. (Years later, in a “crisis of identity,” he will discover that there is nothing behind the act, that his mask is protecting a vacuum.) Thus, his emotional capacity is stunted and, instead of “spontaneity” or emotional freedom, it is the arctic wastes of repression that he acquires.

He cannot know by what imperceptible steps he, too, has become a phony.

Now he is ready to discover that he need not gamble on the unpredictable approval of the intangible, omnipotent power which he cannot name, but senses all around him, which is named the will of the pack. He discovers that there are ways to manipulate its omnipotence. He observes that some of the other children manage to impose their wishes on the pack, but they never say so openly. He observes that the shifting will of the pack is not so mysterious as it seemed at first, that it is swung by a silent contest of wills among those who compete for the role of pack leaders.

How does one fight in such a competition? He cannot say—the answer would take conceptual knowledge—but he learns by doing: by flattering, threatening, cajoling, intimidating, bribing, deceiving the members of the pack. Which tactics does one use, when and on whom? He cannot say—it has to be done by “instinct” (i.e., by the unnamed, but automatized connections in his mind). What does he gain from this struggle? He cannot say. He has long since forgotten why he started it—whether he had some particular wish to achieve, or out of revenge or frustration or aimlessness. He feels dimly that there was nothing else to do.

His own feelings now swing unpredictably, alternating between capricious fits of domination, and stretches of passive, compliant indifference which he can name only as: “What’s the use?” He sees no contradiction between his cynical maneuvering and his unalterable fear of the pack: the first is motivated by and reinforces the second. The will of the pack has been internalized: his unaccountable emotions become his proof of its omnipotence.

The issue, to him, is now metaphysical. His subconscious is programmed, his fundamentals are set. By means of the wordless integrations in his brain, the faceless, intangible shape of the pack now stands between him and reality, with the will of the pack as the dominant power. He is “adjusted.”

Is this his conscious idea? It is not: he is wholly dominated by his subconscious. Is it a reasoned conviction? It is not: he has not discovered reason. A child needs periods of privacy in order to learn to think. He has had less privacy in that nursery school than a convict in a crowded concentration camp. He has had no privacy even for his bathroom functions, let alone for such an unsocial activity as concept-formation.

He has acquired no incentive, no motive, to develop his intellect. Of what importance can reality be to him if his fate depends on the pack? Of what importance is thought, when the whole of his mental attention and energy are trained to focus on detecting the emotional vibrations of the pack? Reality, to him, is no longer an exciting challenge, but a dark, unknowable threat, which evokes a feeling he did not have when he started: a feeling not of ignorance, but of failure, not of helplessness, but of impotence—a sense of his own malfunctioning mind. The pack is the only realm he knows where he feels at home; he needs its protection and reassurance; the art of human manipulation is the only skill he has acquired.

But humility and hostility are two sides of the same coin. An overwhelming hostility toward all men is his basic emotion, his automatic context for the concept “man.” Every

stranger he meets is a potential threat—a member of that mystic entity, “others,” which rules him—an enemy to appease and to deceive.

What became of his potential intelligence? Every precondition of its use has been stunted; every prop supporting his mind has been cut: he has no self-confidence—no concept of self—no sense of morality—no sense of time-continuity—no ability to project the future—no ability to grasp, to integrate or to apply abstractions—no firm distinction between existence and consciousness—no values, with the mechanism of repression paralyzing his evaluative capacity.

Any one of these mental habits would be sufficient to handicap his mind—let alone the weight of the total, the calculated product of a system devised to cripple his rational faculty.

At the age of five-and-a-half, he is ready to be released into the world: an impotent creature, unable to think, unable to face or deal with reality, a creature who combines brashness and fear, who can recite its memorized lessons, but cannot understand them—a creature deprived of its means of survival, doomed to limp or stumble or crawl through life in search of some nameless relief from a chronic, nameless, incomprehensible pain.

The vase can now be broken—the monster is made. The comprachicos of the mind have performed the basic surgery and mangled the wiring—the connections—in his brain. But their job is not completed; it has merely begun.

II

Is the damage done to a child’s mind by a Progressive nursery school irreparable?

Scientific evidence indicates that it is in at least one respect: the time wasted in delaying a child’s cognitive development cannot be made up. The latest research on the subject shows that a child whose early cognitive training has been neglected will never catch up, in intellectual progress, with a properly trained child of approximately the same intelligence (as far as this last can be estimated). Thus all the graduates of a Progressive nursery school are robbed of their full potential, and their further development is impeded, slowed down, made much harder.

But the Progressive nursery school does not merely neglect the cognitive training that a child needs in his early years: it stifles his normal development. It conditions his mind to an anti-conceptual method of functioning that paralyzes his rational faculty.

Can the damage be corrected or is the child doomed to a lifetime of conceptual impotence?

This is an open question. No firm answer can be given on the present level of knowledge.

We know that a child’s bones are not fully formed at birth: they are soft and plastic up to a certain age, and harden gradually into their final shape. There is a strong likelihood that the same is true of a child’s mind: it is blank and flexible at birth, but its early programming may become indelible at a certain point. The body has its own timetable of development, and so, perhaps, has the mind. If some complex skills are not acquired by a certain age, it may become too late to acquire them. But the mind has a wider range of possibilities, a greater capacity to recover, because its volitional faculty gives it the power to control its operations.

Volition, however, does not mean non-identity; it does not mean that one can misuse one’s mind indefinitely without suffering permanent damage. But it does mean that so long as a child is not insane, he has the power to correct many faults in his mental functioning, and

many injuries, whether they are self-inflicted or imposed on him from the outside. The latter are easier to correct than the former.

The evidence indicates that some graduates of the Progressive nursery schools do recover and others do not—and that their recovery depends on the degree of their “nonadjustment,” i.e., the degree to which they rejected the school’s conditioning. By “recovery” I mean the eventual development of a rational psycho-epistemology, i.e., of the ability to deal with reality by means of conceptual knowledge.

It is the little “misfits” who have the best chance to recover—the children who do not conform, the children who endure three years of agonizing misery, loneliness, confusion, abuse by the teachers and by their “peers,” but remain aloof and withdrawn, unable to give in, unable to fake, armed with nothing but the feeling that there is something wrong in that nursery school.

These are the “problem children” who are periodically put through the torture of the teachers’ complaints to their parents, and through the helpless despair of seeing their parents side with the torturers. Some of these children are violently rebellious; others seem outwardly timid and passive, but are outside the reach of any pressure or influence. Whatever their particular forms of bearing the unbearable, what they all have in common is the inability to fit in, i.e., to accept the intellectual authority of the pack. (Not all “misfits” belong to this category; there are children who reject the pack for entirely different reasons, such as frustrated powerlust.)

The nonconformists are heroic little martyrs who are given no credit by anyone—not even by themselves, since they cannot identify the nature of their battle. They do not have the conceptual knowledge or the introspective skill to grasp that they are unable and unwilling to accept anything without understanding it, and that they are holding to the sovereignty of their own judgment against the terrifying pressure of everyone around them.

These children have no means of knowing that what they are fighting for is the integrity of their minds—and that they will come out of those schools with many problems, battered, twisted, frightened, discouraged or embittered, but it is their rational faculty that they will have saved.

The little manipulators, the “adjusted” little pack leaders, will not. The manipulators have, in effect, sold out: they have accepted the approval of the pack and/or power over the pack as a value, in exchange for surrendering their judgment. To fake reality at an age when one has not learned fully to grasp it—to automatize a technique of deception when one has not yet automatized the technique of perception—is an extremely dangerous thing to do to one’s own mind. It is highly doubtful whether this kind of priority can ever be reversed.

The little manipulators acquire a vested interest in evasion. The longer they practice their policies, the greater their fear of reality and the slimmer their chance of ever recapturing the desire to face it, to know, to understand. The principle involved is clear on an adult level: when men are caught in the power of an enormous evil—such as under the Soviet or Nazi dictatorship—those who are willing to suffer as helpless victims, rather than make terms with the evil, have a good chance to regain their psychological health; but not those who join the G.P.U. or the S.S.

Even though the major part of the guilt belongs to his teachers, the little manipulator is not entirely innocent. He is too young to understand the immorality of his course, but nature gives him an emotional warning: he does not like himself when he engages in deception, he feels dirty, unworthy, unclean. This protest of a violated consciousness serves the same purpose as physical pain: it is the warning of a dangerous malfunction or injury. No one can

force a child to disregard a warning of this kind; if he does, if he chooses to place some value above his own sense of himself, what he gradually kills is his self-esteem. Thereafter, he is left without motivation to correct his psycho-epistemology; he has reason to dread reason, reality and truth; his entire emotional mechanism is automatized to serve as a defense against them.

The majority of the Progressive nursery schools' graduates represent a mixture of psychological elements, on a continuum between the nonconformist and the manipulator. Their future development depends in large part on the nature of their future education. The nursery schools have taught them the wrong method of mental functioning; now they are expected to begin acquiring mental content, i.e., ideas, by such means as they possess.

The modern educators—the comprachicos of the mind—are prepared for the second stage of their task: to indoctrinate the children with the kinds of ideas that will make their intellectual recovery unlikely, if not impossible—and to do it by the kind of method that continues and reinforces the conditioning begun in the nursery school. The program is devised to stunt the minds of those who managed to survive the first stage with some remnants of their rational capacity, and to cripple those who were fortunate enough not to be sent to a Progressive nursery. In comprachico terms, this program means: to keep tearing the scabs off the wounds left by the original surgery and to keep infecting the wounds until the child's mind and spirit are broken.

To stunt a mind means to arrest its conceptual development, its power to use abstractions—and to keep it on a concrete-bound, perceptual method of functioning.

John Dewey, the father of modern education (including the Progressive nursery schools), opposed the teaching of theoretical (i.e., conceptual) knowledge, and demanded that it be replaced by concrete, “practical” action, in the form of “class projects” which would develop the students' social spirit.

“The mere absorbing of facts and truths,” he wrote, “is so exclusively individual an affair that it tends very naturally to pass into selfishness. There is no obvious social motive for the acquirement of mere learning, there is no clear social gain in success thereat.” (John Dewey, *The School and Society*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1956, p. 15.)

This much is true: the perception of reality, the learning of facts, the ability to distinguish truth from falsehood, are exclusively individual capacities; the mind is an exclusively individual “affair”; there is no such thing as a collective brain. And intellectual integrity—the refusal to sacrifice one's mind and one's knowledge of the truth to any social pressures—is a profoundly and properly selfish attitude.

The goal of modern education is to stunt, stifle and destroy the students' capacity to develop such an attitude, as well as its conceptual and psycho-epistemological preconditions.

There are two different methods of learning: by memorizing and by understanding. The first belongs primarily to the perceptual level of a human consciousness, the second to the conceptual.

The first is achieved by means of repetition and concrete-bound association (a process in which one sensory concrete leads automatically to another, with no regard to content or meaning). The best illustration of this process is a song which was popular some twenty years ago, called “Mairzy Doats.” Try to recall some poem you had to memorize in grade school; you will find that you can recall it only if you recite the sounds automatically, by the “Mairzy Doats” method; if you focus on the meaning, the memory vanishes. This form of learning is shared with man by the higher animals: all animal training consists of making the animal memorize a series of actions by repetition and association.

The second method of learning—by a process of understanding—is possible only to man. To understand means to focus on the content of a given subject (as against the sensory—visual or auditory—form in which it is communicated), to isolate its essentials, to establish its relationship to the previously known, and to integrate it with the appropriate categories of other subjects. Integration is the essential part of understanding.

The predominance of memorizing is proper only in the first few years of a child's education, while he is observing and gathering perceptual material. From the time he reaches the conceptual level (i.e., from the time he learns to speak), his education requires a progressively larger scale of understanding and progressively smaller amounts of memorizing.

Just as modern educators proclaim the importance of developing a child's individuality, yet train him to conform to the pack, so they denounce memorization, yet their method of teaching ignores the requirements of conceptual development and confines learning predominantly to a process of memorizing. To grasp what this does to a child's mind, project what it would do to a child's body if, at the age of seven, he were not permitted to walk, but were required to crawl and stumble like an infant.

The comprachico technique starts at the base. The child's great achievement in learning to speak is undercut and all but nullified by the method used to teach him to read. The "Look-Say" method substitutes the concrete-bound memorization of the visual shapes of words for the phonetic method which taught a child to treat letters and sounds as abstractions. The senseless memorizing of such a vast amount of sensory material places an abnormal strain on a child's mental capacity, a burden that cannot be fully retained, integrated or automatized. The result is a widespread "reading neurosis"—the inability to learn to read—among children, including many of above average intelligence, a neurosis that did not exist prior to the introduction of the "Look-Say" method. (If the enlightenment and welfare of children were the modern educators' goal, the incidence of that neurosis would have made them check and revise their educational theories; it has not.)

The ultimate result is the half-illiterate college freshmen who are unable to read a book (in the sense of understanding its content, as against looking at its pages) or to write a paper or to spell—or even to speak coherently, which is caused by the inability to organize their thoughts, if any.

When applied to conceptual material, memorizing is the psycho-epistemological destroyer of understanding and of the ability to think. But throughout their grade- and high-school years, memorizing becomes the students' dominant (and, in some cases, virtually exclusive) method of mental functioning. They have no other way to cope with the schools' curricula that consist predominantly of random, haphazard, disintegrated (and unintegratable) snatches of various subjects, without context, continuity or systematic progression.

The material taught in one class has no relation to and frequently contradicts the material taught in another. The cure, introduced by the modern educators, is worse than the disease; it consists in the following procedure: a "theme" is picked at random for a given period of time, during which every teacher presents his subject in relation to that theme, without context or earlier preparation. For instance, if the theme is "shoes," the teacher of physics discusses the machinery required to make shoes, the teacher of chemistry discusses the tanning of leather, the teacher of economics discusses the production and consumption of shoes, the teacher of mathematics gives problems in calculating the costs of shoes, the teacher of English reads stories involving shoes (or the plight of the barefoot), and so on.

This substitutes the accidental concrete of an arbitrarily picked "theme" for the conceptual integration of the content of one discipline with that of another—thus conditioning the students' minds to the concrete-bound, associational method of functioning,

while they are dealing with conceptual material. Knowledge acquired in that manner cannot be retained beyond the next exam, and sometimes not even that long.

The indoctrination of children with a mob spirit—under the category of “social adjustment”—is conducted openly and explicitly. The supremacy of the pack is drilled, pounded and forced into the student’s mind by every means available to the comprachicos of the classroom, including the contemptible policy of grading the students on their social adaptability (under various titles). No better method than this type of grading could be devised to destroy a child’s individuality and turn him into a stale little conformist, to stunt his unformed sense of personal identity and make him blend into an anonymous mob, to penalize the best, the most intelligent and honest children in the class, and to reward the worst, the dull, the lethargic, the dishonest.

Still more evil (because more fundamental) is the “discussion” method of teaching, which is used more frequently in the humanities than in the physical sciences, for obvious reasons. Following this method, the teacher abstains from lecturing and merely presides at a free-for-all or “bull session,” while the students express their “views” on the subject under study, which they do not know and have come to school to learn. What these sessions produce in the minds of the students is an unbearable boredom.

But this is much worse than a mere waste of the students’ time. They are being taught some crucial things, though not the ostensible subject of study. They are being given a lesson in metaphysics and epistemology. They are being taught, by implication, that there is no such thing as a firm, objective reality, which man’s mind must learn to perceive correctly; that reality is an indeterminate flux and can be anything the pack wants it to be; that truth or falsehood is determined by majority vote. And more: that knowledge is unnecessary and irrelevant, since the teacher’s views have no greater validity than the oratory of the dullest and most ignorant student—and, therefore, that reason, thinking, intelligence and education are of no importance or value. To the extent that a student absorbs these notions, what incentive would he have to continue his education and to develop his mind? The answer may be seen today on any college campus.

As to the content of the courses in the grade and high schools, the anti-rational indoctrination is carried on in the form of slanted, distorted material, of mystic-altruist-collectivist slogans, of propaganda for the supremacy of emotions over reason—but this is merely a process of cashing in on the devastation wrought in the children’s psycho-epistemology. Most of the students do graduate as full-fledged little collectivists, reciting the appropriate dogma, but one cannot say that this represents their convictions. The truth is much worse than that: they are incapable of holding any convictions of any kind, and they gravitate to collectivism because that is what they have memorized—and also because one does not turn to reason and independence out of fear, helplessness and self-doubt.

III

No matter what premises a child may form in his grade- and high-school years, the educational system works to multiply his inner conflicts.

The graduates of the Progressive nurseries are caught in the clash between their dazed, unfocused, whim-oriented psycho-epistemology and the demands of reality, with which they are not prepared to deal. They are expected to acquire some sort of formal knowledge, to pass exams, to achieve acceptable grades, i.e., to comply with some minimal factual norms—but, to them, it is a metaphysical betrayal. Facts are what they have been trained to ignore; facts

cannot be learned by the kind of mental process they have automatized: by an animal-like method of catching the emotional cues emitted by the pack. The pack is still there, but it cannot help them at examination time—which they have to face in a state they have been taught to regard as evil: alone.

The panic of the conflict between their foggy subjectivism and the rudiments of objectivity left in the schools by a civilized past, leads to a nameless resentment in the minds of such children, to a wordless feeling that they are being unfairly imposed upon—they do not know how or by whom—to a growing hostility without object. The *comprachicos*, in due time, will offer them an object.

Some of the brighter children—those who are mentally active and do want to learn—are caught in a different conflict. Struggling to integrate the chaotic snatches of information taught in their classes, they discover the omissions, the non sequiturs, the contradictions, which are seldom explained or resolved. Their questions are usually ignored or resented or laughed at or evaded by means of explanations that confuse the issue further. A child may give up, in bewilderment, concluding that the pursuit of knowledge is senseless, that education is an enormous pretense of some evil kind which he cannot understand—and thus he is started on the road to anti-intellectuality and mental stagnation. Or a child may conclude that the school will give him nothing, that he must learn on his own—which is the best conclusion to draw in the circumstances, except that it can lead him to a profound contempt for teachers, for other adults and, often, for all men (which is the road to subjectivism).

The “socializing” aspects of the school, the pressure to conform to the pack, are, for him, a special kind of torture. A thinking child cannot conform—thought does not bow to authority. The resentment of the pack toward intelligence and independence is older than Progressive education; it is an ancient evil (among children and adults alike), a product of fear, self-doubt and envy. But Pragmatism, the father of Progressive education, is a Kantian philosophy and uses Kant’s technique of cashing in on human weaknesses and fears.

Instead of teaching children respect for one another’s individuality, achievements and rights, Progressive education gives an official stamp of moral righteousness to the tendency of frightened half-savages to gang up on one another, to form “in-groups” and to persecute the outsider. When, on top of it, the outsider is penalized or reprimanded for his inability to “get along with people,” the rule of mediocrity is elevated into a system; “Mediocrity” does not mean an average intelligence; it means an average intelligence that resents and envies its betters.) Progressive education has institutionalized an Establishment of Envy.

The thinking child is not antisocial (he is, in fact, the only type of child fit for social relationships). When he develops his first values and conscious convictions, particularly as he approaches adolescence, he feels an intense desire to share them with a friend who would understand him; if frustrated, he feels an acute sense of loneliness, (Loneliness is specifically the experience of this type of child—or adult; it is the experience of those who have something to offer. The emotion that drives conformists to “belong,” is not loneliness, but fear—the fear of intellectual independence and responsibility. The thinking child seeks equals; the conformist seeks protectors.)

One of the most evil aspects of modern schools is the spectacle of a thinking child trying to “adjust” to the pack, trying to hide his intelligence (and his scholastic grades) and to act like “one of the boys.” He never succeeds, and is left wondering helplessly: “What is wrong with me? What do I lack? What do they want?” He has no way of knowing that his lack consists in thinking of such questions. The questions imply that there are reasons, causes, principles, values—which are the very things the pack mentality dreads, evades and resents. He has no way of knowing that one’s psycho-epistemology cannot be hidden, that it shows in many

subtle ways, and that the pack rejects him because they sense his factual (i.e., judging) orientation, his psycho-epistemological self-confidence and lack of fear. (Existentially, such loners lack social self-confidence and, more often than not, are afraid of the pack, but the issue is not existential.)

Gradually, the thinking child gives up the realm of human relationships. He draws the conclusion that he can understand science, but not people, that people are unknowable, that they are outside the province of reason, that some other cognitive means are required, which he lacks. Thus he comes to accept a false dichotomy, best designated as reason versus people, which his teachers are striving to instill and reinforce.

The conformists, in the face of that dichotomy, give up reason; he gives up people. Repressing his need of friendship, he gives up concern with human values, with moral questions, with social issues, with the entire realm of the humanities. Seeking rationality, objectivity and intelligibility—i.e., a realm where he can function—he escapes into the physical sciences or technology or business, i.e., into the professions that deal primarily with matter rather than with man. (This is a major cause of America's "brain drain," of the appalling intellectual poverty in the humanities, with the best minds running—for temporary protection—to the physical sciences.)

There is nothing wrong, of course, in choosing a career in the physical professions, if such is one's rational preference. But it is a tragic error if a young man chooses it as an escape, because the escape is illusory. Since the dichotomy he accepted is false, since repression is not a solution to anything, but merely an impairment of his mental capacity, the psychological price he pays is nameless fear, unearned guilt, self-doubt, neurosis, and, more often than not, indifference, suspicion or hostility toward people. The result, in his case, is the exact opposite of the social harmony the comprachicos of Progressive education had promised to achieve.

There are children who succumb to another, similar dichotomy: values versus people. Prompted by loneliness, unable to know that the pleasure one finds in human companionship is possible only on the grounds of holding the same values, a child may attempt to reverse cause and effect: he places companionship first and tries to adopt the values of others, repressing his own half-formed value-judgments, in the belief that this will bring him friends. The dogma of conformity to the pack encourages and reinforces his moral self-abnegation. Thereafter, he struggles blindly to obtain from people some satisfaction which he cannot define (and which cannot be found), to alleviate a sense of guilt he cannot name, to fill a vacuum he is unable to identify. He alternates between abject compliance with his friends' wishes, and peremptory demands for affection- he becomes the kind of emotional dependent that no friends of any persuasion could stand for long. The more he fails, the more desperately he clings to his pursuit of people and "love." But the nameless emotion growing in his subconscious, never to be admitted or identified, is hatred for people. The result, again, is the opposite of the comprachicos' alleged goal.

No matter what their individual problems or what defenses they choose, all the children—from the "adjusted" to the independent—suffer from a common blight in their grade—and high-school years: boredom. Their reasons vary, but the emotional result is the same. Learning is a conceptual process; an educational method devised to ignore, bypass and contradict the requirements of conceptual development, cannot arouse any interest in learning. The "adjusted" are bored because they are unable actively to absorb knowledge. The independent are bored because they seek knowledge, not games of "class projects" or group "discussions." The first are unable to digest their lessons; the second are starved.

The comprachicos succeed in either case. The independent children, who resist the conditioning and preserve some part of their rationality, are predominantly shunted, or self-

exiled, into the physical sciences and allied professions, away from social, philosophical or humanistic concerns. The social field—and thus society's future—is left to the “adjusted,” to the stunted, twisted, mutilated minds the comprachicos' technique was intended to produce.

The average high-school graduate is a jerky, anxious, incoherent youth with a mind like a scarecrow made of sundry patches that cannot be integrated into any shape. He has no concept of knowledge: he does not know when he knows and when he does not know. His chronic fear is of what he is supposed to know, and his pretentious posturing is intended to hide the fact that he hasn't the faintest idea. He alternates between oracular pronouncements and blankly evasive silence. He assumes the pose of an authority on the latest, journalistic issues in politics (part of his “class projects”) and recites the canned bromides of third-rate editorials as if they were his original discoveries. He does not know how to read or write or consult a dictionary. He is sly and “wise”; he has the cynicism of a decadent adult, and the credulity of a child. He is loud, aggressive, belligerent. His main concern is to prove that he is afraid of nothing—because he is scared to death of everything.

His mind is in a state of whirling confusion. He has never learned to conceptualize, i.e., to identify, to organize, to integrate the content of his mind. In school and out, he has observed and experienced (or, more precisely, been exposed to) many things, and he cannot tell their meaning or import, he does not know what to make of them, sensing dimly that he should make something somehow. He does not know where to begin; he feels chronically behind himself, unable to catch up with his own mental content—as if the task of untangling it were far beyond his capacity.

Since he was prevented from conceptualizing his cognitive material step by step, as he acquired it, the accumulation of unidentified experiences and perceptual impressions is now such that he feels paralyzed. When he tries to think, his mind runs into a blank wall every few steps; his mental processes seem to dissolve in a labyrinth of question marks and blind alleys. His subconscious, like an unattended basement, is cluttered with the irrelevant, the accidental, the misunderstood, the ungrasped, the undefined, the not-fully-remembered; it does not respond to his mental efforts. He gives up.

The secret of his psycho-epistemology—which baffles those who deal with him—lies in the fact that, as an adult, he has to use concepts, but he uses concepts by a child's perceptual method. He uses them as concretes, as the immediately given—without context, definitions, integrations or specific referents; his only context is the immediate moment. To what, then, do his concepts refer? To a foggy mixture of partial knowledge, memorized responses, habitual associations, his audience's reactions and his own feelings, which represent the content of his mind at that particular moment. On the next day or occasion, the same concepts will refer to different things, according to the changes in his mood and in the immediate circumstances.

He seems able to understand a discussion or a rational argument, sometimes even on an abstract, theoretical level. He is able to participate, to agree or disagree after what appears to be a critical examination of the issue. But the next time one meets him, the conclusions he reached are gone from his mind, as if the discussion had never occurred even though he remembers it: he remembers the event, i.e., a discussion, not its intellectual content.

It is beside the point to accuse him of hypocrisy or lying (though some part of both is necessarily involved). His problem is much worse than that: he was sincere, he meant what he said in and for that moment. But it ended with that moment. Nothing happens in his mind to an idea he accepts or rejects; there is no processing, no integration, no application to himself, his actions or his concerns; he is unable to use it or even to retain it. Ideas, i.e., abstractions, have no reality to him: abstractions involve the past and the future, as well as the present; nothing is fully real to him except the present. Concepts, in his mind, become percepts—

percepts of people uttering sounds; and percepts end when the stimuli vanish. When he uses words, his mental operations are closer to those of a parrot than of a human being. In the strict sense of the word, he has not learned to speak.

But there is one constant in his mental flux. The subconscious is an integrating mechanism; when left without conscious control, it goes on integrating on its own— and, like an automatic blender, his subconscious squeezes its clutter of trash to produce a single basic emotion: fear.

He is not equipped to earn a living in a primitive village, but he finds himself in the midst of the brilliant complexity of an industrial, technological civilization, which he cannot begin to understand. He senses that something is demanded of him—by his parents, by his friends, by people at large, and, since he is a living organism, by his own restless energy—something he is unable to deliver.

He has been trained to react, not to act; to respond, not to initiate; to pursue pleasure, not purpose. He is a playboy without money, taste or the capacity of enjoyment. He is guided by his feelings—he has nothing else. And his feelings are only various shades of panic.

He cannot turn for help to his parents. In most cases, they are unable and/or unwilling to understand him; he distrusts them and he is too inarticulate to explain anything. What he needs is rational guidance; what they offer him is their own brand of irrationality. If they are old-fashioned, they tell him that he is too self-indulgent and it's about time he came down to earth and assumed some responsibility; for moral guidance, they say, he ought to go to church. If they are modern, they tell him that he takes himself too seriously and ought to have more fun; for moral guidance, they tell him that nobody is ever fully right or fully wrong, and take him to a cocktail party raising funds for some liberal cause.

His parents are the products of the same educational system, but at an earlier stage, at a time when the school conditioning was furtively indirect, and rational influences still existed in the culture - which permitted them to get away with discarding intellectual concerns and playing the fashionable game of undercutting reason, while believing that somebody else would always be there to provide them with a civilized world.

Of any one group involved, it is not the comprachicos who are the guiltiest, it is the parents—particularly the educated ones who could afford to send their children to Progressive nursery schools. Such parents would do anything for their children, except give them a moment's thought or an hour's critical inquiry into the nature of the educational institutions to be selected. Prompted chiefly by the desire to get the children off their hands and out of their way, they selected schools as they select clothes—according to the latest fashion.

The comprachicos do not hide their theories and methods; they propagate them openly, in countless books, lectures, magazines and school brochures. Their theme is clear: they attack the intellect and proclaim their hatred of reason—the rest is gush and slush. Anyone who delivers a helpless child into their hands, does so because he shares their motives. Mistakes of this size are not made innocently.

There is, however, an innocent group of parents: the hardworking, uneducated ones who want to give their children a better chance in life and a brighter future than their own. These parents spend a lifetime in poverty, struggling, skimping, saving, working overtime to send their children through school (particularly, through college). They have a profound respect for the educated people, for teachers, for learning. They would not be able to conceive of the comprachico mentality—to imagine an educator who works, not to enlighten, but to cripple their children. Such parents are the victims of as vicious a fraud as any recorded in criminal history.

(This last is one of the reasons to question the motives—and the compassion—of those unemployed busy-bodies who flitter about, protecting consumers from oversized breakfast-cereal boxes. What about the consumers of education?)

If you want to grasp what the comprachicos' methods have done to the mind of a high-school graduate, remember that the intellect is often compared to the faculty of sight. Try to project what you would feel if your eyesight were damaged in such a way that you were left with nothing but peripheral vision. You would sense vague, unidentifiable shapes floating around you, which would vanish when you tried to focus on them, then would reappear on the periphery and swim and switch and multiply. This is the mental state—and the terror—produced in their students by the comprachicos of Progressive education.

Can such a youth recondition his mental processes? It is possible, but the automatization of a conceptual method of functioning—which, in his nursery-school years, would have been an easy, joyous, natural process—would now require an excruciatingly difficult effort.

As an illustration of the consequences of delaying nature's timetable, consider the following. In our infancy, all of us had to learn and automatize the skill of integrating into percepts the material provided by our various sense organs. It was a natural, painless process which—as we can infer by observing infants—we were eager to learn. But medical science has recorded cases of children who were born blind and later, in their youth or adulthood, underwent an operation that restored their sight. Such persons are not able to see, i.e., they experience sensations of sight, but cannot perceive objects. For example, they recognize a triangle by touch, but cannot connect it to the sight of a triangle; the sight conveys nothing to them. The ability to see is not innate—it is a skill that has to be acquired. But the material provided by these persons' other senses is so thoroughly integrated and automatized that they are unable instantly to break it up to add a new element, vision. This integration now requires such a long, difficult process of retraining that few of them choose to undertake it. These few succeed, after a heroically persevering struggle. The rest give up, preferring to stay in their familiar world of touch and sound—to remain sightless for life.

An unusual kind of moral strength and of personal ambition (i.e., of self-esteem) is required to regain one's sight: a profound love of life, a passionate refusal to remain a cripple, an intense dedication to the task of achieving the best within one's reach. The reward is commensurate.

The same kind of dedication and as difficult a struggle are required of a modern high-school graduate to regain his rational faculty. The reward is as great—or greater. In the midst of his chronic anxiety, he is still able to experience some moments of freedom, to catch a few glimpses of what life would be like in a joyous state of self-confidence. And one thing he does know for certain: that there is something wrong with him. He has a spring-board—a slender, precarious one, but still a springboard—for an incentive to recapture the use of his mind.

The comprachicos destroy that incentive in the third stage of their job: in college.

IV

Most young people retain some hold on their rational faculty—or, at least, some unidentified desire to retain it—until their early twenties, approximately until their post-college years. The symptom of that desire is their quest for a comprehensive view of life.

It is man's rational faculty that integrates his cognitive material and enables him to understand it; his only means of understanding is conceptual. A consciousness, like any other

vital faculty, cannot accept its own impotence without protest. No matter how badly disorganized, a young person's mind still gropes for answers to fundamental questions, sensing that all of its content hangs precariously in a vacuum.

This is not a matter of "idealism," but of psycho-epistemological necessity. On the conscious level, the countless alternatives confronting him make a young person aware of the fact that he has to make choices and that he does not know what to choose or how to act. On the subconscious level, his psycho-epistemology has not yet automatized a lethargic resignation to a state of chronic suffering (which is the "solution" of most adults)—and the painful conflicts of his inner contradictions, of his self-doubt, of his impotent confusion, make him search frantically for some form of inner unity and mental order. His quest represents the last convulsions of his cognitive faculty at the approach of atrophy, like a last cry of protest.

For the few brief years of his adolescence, a young person's future is urgently, though dimly, real to him; he senses that he has to determine it in some unknown way.

A thinking youth has a vague glimmer of the nature of his need. It is expressed in his concern with broad philosophical questions, particularly with moral issues (i.e., with a code of values to guide his actions). An average youth merely feels helpless, and his erratic restlessness is a form of escape from the desperate feeling that "things ought to make sense."

By the time they are ready for college, both types of youths have been hurt, in and out of school, by countless clashes with the irrationality of their elders and of today's culture. The thinking youth has been frustrated in his longing to find people who take ideas seriously; but he believes that he will find them in college—in the alleged citadel of reason and wisdom. The average youth feels that things do not make sense to him, but they do to someone somewhere in the world, and someone will make the world intelligible to him someday.

For both of them, college is the last hope. They lose it in their freshman year.

It is generally known in academic circles that, according to surveys, the students' interest in their studies is greatest in their freshman year and diminishes progressively each year thereafter. The educators deplore it, but do not question the nature of the courses they are giving.

With rare exceptions, which are lost in the academic "mainstream," college courses in the humanities do not provide the students with knowledge, but with the conviction that it is wrong, naive or futile to seek knowledge. What they provide is not information, but rationalization—the rationalization of the students' concrete-bound, perceptual, emotion-oriented method of mental functioning. The courses are designed to protect the status quo—not the existential, political or social status quo, but the miserable status quo of the students' psycho-epistemology, as laid down in the Progressive nursery schools.

The Progressive nurseries pleaded for a delay of the process of education, asserting that cognitive training is premature for a young child—and conditioned his mind to an anti-cognitive method of functioning. The grade and high schools reinforced the conditioning: struggling helplessly with random snatches of knowledge, the student learned to associate a sense of dread, resentment and self-doubt with the process of learning. College completes the job, declaring explicitly—to a receptive audience — that there is nothing to learn, that reality is unknowable, certainty is unattainable, the mind is an instrument of self-deception, and the sole function of reason is to find conclusive proof of its own impotence.

Even though philosophy is held in a (today) well-earned contempt by the other college departments, it is philosophy that determines the nature and direction of all the other courses, because it is philosophy that formulates the principles of epistemology, i.e., the rules by which

men are to acquire knowledge. The influence of the dominant philosophic theories permeates every other department, including the physical sciences—and becomes the more dangerous because accepted subconsciously. The philosophic theories of the past two hundred years, since Immanuel Kant, seem to justify the attitude of those who dismiss philosophy as empty, inconsequential verbiage. But this precisely is the danger: surrendering philosophy (i.e., the foundations of knowledge) to the purveyors of empty verbiage is far from inconsequential. It is particularly to philosophy that one must apply the advice of Ellsworth Toohey in *The Fountainhead*: “Don’t bother to examine a folly, ask yourself only what it accomplishes.”

Consider the progressive stages of modern philosophy, not from the aspect of its philosophic content, but of its psycho-epistemological goals. When Pragmatism declares that reality is an indeterminate flux which can be anything people want it to be, nobody accepts it literally. But it strikes a note of emotional recognition in the mind of a Progressive nursery graduate, because it seems to justify a feeling he has not been able to explain: the omnipotence of the pack. So he accepts it as true in some indeterminate way—to be used when and as needed. When Pragmatism declares that truth is to be judged by consequences, it justifies his inability to project the future, to plan his course of action long-range, and sanctions his wish to act on the spur of the moment, to try anything once and then discover whether he can get away with it or not.

When Logical Positivism declares that “reality,” “identity,” “existence,” “mind” are meaningless terms, that man can be certain of nothing but the sensory perceptions of the immediate moment—when it declares that the meaning of the proposition: “Napoleon lost the battle of Waterloo” is your walk to the library where you read it in a book—the Progressive nursery graduate recognizes it as an exact description of his inner state and as a justification of his concrete-bound, perceptual mentality.

When Linguistic Analysis declares that the ultimate reality is not even percepts, but words, and that words have no specific referents, but mean whatever people want them to mean, the Progressive graduate finds himself happily back at home, in the familiar world of his nursery school. He does not have to struggle to grasp an incomprehensible reality, all he has to do is focus on people and watch for the vibrations of how they use words—and compete with his fellow philosophers in how many different vibrations he is able to discover. And more: armed with the prestige of philosophy, he can now tell people what they mean when they speak, which they are unable to know without his assistance—i.e., he can appoint himself interpreter of the will of the pack. What had once been a little manipulator now grows to the full psycho-epistemological stature of a shyster lawyer.

And more: Linguistic Analysis is vehemently opposed to all the intellectual feats he is unable to perform. It is opposed to any kinds of principles or broad generalizations —i.e., to consistency. It is opposed to basic axioms (as “analytic” and “redundant”) —i.e., to the necessity of any grounds for one’s assertions. It is opposed to the hierarchical structure of concepts (i.e., to the process of abstraction) and regards any word as an isolated primary (i.e., as a perceptually given concrete). It is opposed to “system-building”—i.e., to the integration of knowledge.

The Progressive nursery graduate thus finds all his psycho-epistemological flaws transformed into virtues—and, instead of hiding them as a guilty secret, he can flaunt them as proof of his intellectual superiority. As to the students who did not attend a Progressive nursery, they are now worked over to make them equal his mental status.

It is the claim of Linguistic Analysis that its purpose is not the communication of any particular philosophic content, but the training of a student’s mind. This is true—in the terrible, butchering sense of a comprachico operation. The detailed discussions of

inconsequential minutiae—the discourses on trivia picked at random and in midstream, without base, context or conclusion—the shocks of self-doubt at the professor's sudden revelations of some such fact as the students' inability to define the word “but,” which, he claims, proves that they do not understand their own statements—the countering of the question: “What is the meaning of philosophy?” with: “Which sense of ‘meaning’ do you mean?” followed by a discourse on twelve possible uses of the word “meaning,” by which time the question is lost—and, above all, the necessity to shrink one's focus to the range of a flea's, and to keep it there— will cripple the best of minds, if it attempts to comply.

“Mind-training” pertains to psycho-epistemology; it consists in making a mind automatize certain processes, turning them into permanent habits. What habits does Linguistic Analysis inculcate? Context-dropping, “concept-stealing,” disintegration, purposelessness, the inability to grasp, retain or deal with abstractions. Linguistic Analysis is not a philosophy, it is a method of eliminating the capacity for philosophical thought—it is a course in brain-destruction, a systematic attempt to turn a rational animal into an animal unable to reason.

Why? What is the comprachicos' motive?

To paraphrase Victor Hugo: “And what did they make of these children? “Monsters. “Why monsters? “To rule.”

Man's mind is his basic means of survival—and of self-protection. Reason is the most selfish human faculty: it has to be used in and by a man's own mind, and its product — truth—makes him inflexible, intransigent, impervious to the power of any pack or any ruler. Deprived of the ability to reason, man becomes a docile, pliant, impotent chunk of clay, to be shaped into any subhuman form and used for any purpose by anyone who wants to bother.

There has never been a philosophy, a theory or a doctrine that attacked (or “limited”) reason, which did not also preach submission to the power of some authority. Philosophically, most men do not understand the issue to this day; but psycho-epistemologically, they have sensed it since prehistoric times. Observe the nature of mankind's earliest legends—such as the fall of Lucifer, “the light-bearer,” for the sin of defying authority; or the story of Prometheus, who taught men the practical arts of survival. Power-seekers have always known that if men are to be made submissive, the obstacle is not their feelings, their wishes or their “instincts,” but their minds: if men are to be ruled, then the enemy is reason.

Power-lust is a psycho-epistemological matter. It is not confined to potential dictators or aspiring politicians. It can be experienced, chronically or sporadically, by men in any profession, on any level of intellectual development. It is experienced by shriveled scholars, by noisy playboys, by shabby office managers, by pretentious millionaires, by droning teachers, by cocktail-chasing mothers—by anyone who, having uttered an assertion, confronts the direct glance of a man or a child and hears the words: “But that is not true.” Those who, in such moments, feel the desire, not to persuade, but to force the mind behind the direct eyes, are the legions that make the comprachicos possible.

Not all of the modern teachers are consciously motivated by power-lust, though a great many of them are. Not all of them are consciously aware of the goal of obliterating reason by crippling the minds of their students. Some aspire to nothing but the mean little pleasure of fooling and defeating too intelligently, persistently inquiring a student. Some seek nothing but to hide and evade the holes and contradictions in their own intellectual equipment. Some had never sought anything but a safe, undemanding, respectable position—and would not dream of contradicting the majority of their colleagues or of their textbooks. Some are eaten by envy of the rich, the famous, the successful, the independent. Some believe (or try to believe) the thin veneer of humanitarian rationalizations coating the theories of Kant or John Dewey. And all of them are products of the same educational system in its earlier stages.

The system is self-perpetuating: it leads to many vicious circles. There are promising, intelligent teachers who are driven to despair by the obtuse, lethargic, invincibly unthinking mentalities of their students. The grade- and high-school teachers blame it on parental influences; the college professors blame it on the grade- and high-school teachers. Few if any, question the content of the courses. After struggling for a few years, these better teachers give up and retire, or become convinced that reason is beyond the grasp of most men, and remain as bitterly indifferent camp followers of the comprachicos' advance.

But the comprachico leaders—past and present—are aware of their own motives. It is impossible to be consumed by a single passion without knowing its nature, no matter what rationalizations one constructs to hide it from oneself. If you want to see hatred, do not look at wars or concentration camps—these are merely its consequences. Look at the writings of Kant, Dewey, Marcuse and their followers to see pure hatred—hatred of reason and of everything it implies: of intelligence, of ability, of achievement, of success, of self—confidence, of self-esteem, of every bright, happy, benevolent aspect of man. This is the atmosphere, the leitmotif, the sense of life permeating today's educational establishment.

(What brings a human being to the state of a comprachico? Self loathing. The degree of a man's hatred for reason is the measure of his hatred for himself.)

A comprachico leader does not aspire to the role of political dictator. He leaves it to his heir: the mindless brute. The comprachicos are not concerned with establishing anything. The obliteration of reason is their single passion and goal. What comes afterward has no reality to them; dimly, they fancy themselves as the masters who will pull the strings behind the ruler's throne: the brute, they feel, will need them. (That they end up as terrorized bootlickers at the brute's court and at his mercy, as in Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia, is merely an instance of reality's justice.)

Power-lust requires guinea pigs, to develop the techniques of inculcating obedience—and cannon fodder that will obey the orders. College students fill both roles. Psycho-epistemological flattery is the most potent technique to use on a person with a damaged brain. The Progressive nursery graduate's last link to rationality—the feeling that there is something wrong with him—is cut off in college. There is nothing wrong with him, he is told, his is the healthy, natural state, he is merely unable to function in a "System" that ignores human nature; he is normal, the "System" is abnormal.

The term "System" is left undefined, at first; it may be the educational system, the cultural system, the private family system—anything that a student might blame for his inner misery. This induces a paranoid mood, the feeling that he is an innocent victim persecuted by some dark, mysterious powers—which builds up in him a blind, helpless rage. The theories of determinism—with which he is battered in most of his courses—intensify and justify his mood: if he is miserable, he cannot help it, they tell him, he cannot help anything he feels or does, he is a product of society and society has made a bad job of it. By the time he hears that all his troubles—from poor grades to sexual problems to chronic anxiety—are caused by the political system and that the enemy is capitalism, he accepts it as self-evident.

The methods of teaching are essentially the same as those used in high school, only more so. The curriculum is an embodiment of disintegration—a hodgepodge of random subjects, without continuity, context or purpose. It is like a series of Balkanized kingdoms, offering a survey course of floating abstractions or an overdetailed study of a professor's favorite minutiae, with the borders closed to the kingdom in the next classroom, with no connections, no bridges, no maps. Maps—i.e., systematization—are forbidden on principle. Cramming and memorizing are the students' only psycho-epistemological means of getting through. (There are graduates in philosophy who can recite the differences between the early and late

Wittgenstein, but have never had a course on Aristotle. There are graduates in psychology who have pattered about with rats in mazes, with knee-jerking reflexes and with statistics, but never got to an actual study of human psychology.)

The “discussion” seminars are part of the technique of flattery: when an ignorant adolescent is asked to air his views on a subject he has not studied, he gets the message that the status of college student has transformed him from an ignoramus into an authority—and that the significance of any opinion lies in the fact that somebody holds it, with no reasons, knowledge or grounds necessary. (This helps to justify the importance of watching for the vibrations of the pack.)

Such “discussions” advance another purpose of the comprachico technique: the breeding of hostility—the encouragement of criticism rather than creativeness. In the absence of any reasoned views, the students develop the knack of blasting each other’s nonsense (which is not difficult in the circumstances) and come to regard the demolition of a bad argument as the equivalent of the construction of a good one. (The example is set by the professors who, in their own publications and debates, are often brilliant at demolishing one another’s irrational theories, but fall flat in attempting to present a new theory of their own.) In the absence of intellectual content, the students resort to personal attacks, practicing with impunity the old fallacy of *ad hominem*, substituting insults for arguments—with hooligan rudeness and four-letter words accepted as part of their freedom of speech. Thus malice is protected, ideas are not. The unimportance of ideas is further stressed by the demand that the nature of such “discussions” be ignored and the participants remain “good friends”—no matter what offensive exchanges took place—in the name of “intellectual tolerance.”

An eloquent demonstration of today’s general contempt for the power of ideas is offered by the fact that people did not expect an education of this kind to produce any consequences—and are now shocked by the spectacle of college students putting into practice what they have been taught. If, after such a training, the students demand the power to run the universities, why shouldn’t they? They were given that power intellectually and decided to exercise it existentially. They were regarded as qualified arbiters of ideas, without knowledge, preparation or experience—and they decided that they were qualified administrators, without knowledge, preparation or experience.

The students’ demand that their courses be “relevant” to their actual lives has a badly twisted element of validity. The only purpose of education is to teach a student how to live his life—by developing his mind and equipping him to deal with reality. The training he needs is theoretical, i.e., conceptual. He has to be taught to think, to understand, to integrate, to prove. He has to be taught the essentials of the knowledge discovered in the past—and he has to be equipped to acquire further knowledge by his own effort. All of this is what the colleges have renounced, failed in and defaulted on long ago. What they are teaching today has no relevance to anything—neither to theory nor practice nor reality nor human life.

But—in keeping with their concrete-bound psycho-epistemology—what the students regard as “relevant” are such things as courses in “community action,” air pollution, rat-control and guerrilla warfare. Their criteria for determining a college curriculum are the newspaper headlines of the immediate moment, their hierarchy of concerns is established by tabloid editorials, their notion of reality does not extend beyond the latest TV talk-show.

Modern intellectuals used to denounce the influence of comic strips on children; the progress they achieved consists in pushing the children’s interest to the front pages and freezing it there for life.

The conditioning phase of the comprachicos’ task is completed. The students’ development is arrested, their minds are set to respond to slogans, as animals respond to a

trainer's whistle, their brains are embalmed in the syrup of altruism as an automatic substitute for self-esteem—they have nothing left but the terror of chronic anxiety, the blind urge to act, to strike out at whoever caused it, and a boiling hostility against the whole of the universe. They would obey anyone, they need a master, they need to be told what to do. They are ready now to be used as cannon fodder—to attack, to bomb, to burn, to murder, to fight in the streets and die in the gutters. They are a trained pack of miserably impotent freaks, ready to be unleashed against anyone. The comprachicos unleash them against the “System.”

V

In the avalanche of commentaries on the campus riots, a great deal has been said about the students, as if those manifestations of savagery were spontaneous, and about the college administrators, as if their policies of abject appeasement were “repressive”—but very little is said about the faculties. Yet it is the faculty that causes, inspires, manipulates and often stage-manages the riots. In some cases, the majority of the faculty supports the rioters; in others, it is a small comprachico minority that overpowers the faculty majority by spitting in its face. (And if you want to see a negative demonstration of the power of ideas—i.e., a demonstration of what happens to men devoid of philosophical convictions—take a look at the cringing moral cowardice of allegedly civilized scholars in the presence of a handful of faculty hooligans. There have been notable exceptions to this attitude, but not many.)

For several generations, the destruction of reason was carried on under the cover and in the name of reason, which was the Kant-Hegel-James-Dewey method. When every girder of rationality had been undercut, a new philosophy made explicit what had been implicit, and took over the job of providing a rationalization of the students' psycho-epistemological state: Existentialism.

Existentialism elevates chronic anxiety into the realm of metaphysics. Fear, misery, nausea—it declares—are not an individual's fault, they are inherent in human nature, they are an intrinsic, predestined part of the “human condition.” Action is the sole alleviation possible to man. What action? Any action. You do not know how to act? Don't be chicken, courage consists in acting without knowledge. You do not know what goals to choose? There are no standards of choice. Virtue consists in choosing a goal by whim and sticking to it (“committing yourself”) to the grim death. It sounds unreasonable? Reason is man's enemy—your guts, muscles and blood know best.

For several generations, the destruction of freedom (i.e., of capitalism) was carried on under the cover and in the name of freedom. The genteel intellectual conformists, mass-produced in colleges, proclaimed every collectivist tenet, premise and slogan, while professing their abhorrence of dictatorship. When every girder of capitalism had been undercut, when it had been transformed into a crumbling mixed economy —i.e., a state of civil war among pressure groups fighting politely for the legalized privilege of using physical force—the road was cleared for a philosopher who scrapped the politeness and the legality, making explicit what had been implicit: Herbert Marcuse, the avowed enemy of reason and freedom, the advocate of dictatorship, of mystic “insight,” of retrogression to savagery, of universal enslavement, of rule by brute force.

The student activists are the comprachicos' most successful products: they went obediently along every step of the way, never challenging the basic premises inculcated in the Progressive nursery schools. They act in packs, with the will of the pack as their only guide. The scramble for power among their pack leaders and among different packs does not make

them question their premises: they are incapable of questioning anything. So they cling to the belief that mankind can be united into one happily, harmoniously unanimous pack—by force. Brute, physical force is, to them, a natural form of action. Philosophically, it is clear that when men abandon reason, physical force becomes their only means of dealing with one another and of settling disagreements. The activists are the living demonstration of this principle.

The activists' claim that they have no way of "attracting attention" to their demands and of getting what they want except by force—by violent demonstrations, obstruction and destruction—is a pure throwback to the Progressive nursery school, where a tantrum was the only thing required to achieve their wishes. Their hysterical screaming still carries a touch of pouting astonishment at a world that does not respond to an absolute such as: "I want it!" The three-year-old whim-worshiper becomes the twenty-year-old thug.

The activists are a small minority, but they are confronting a helpless, confused, demoralized majority consisting of those who were unable fully to accept the school conditioning or fully to reject it. Among them, a large group represents the activists' fellow travelers and prospective converts: the hippies. The hippies froze on the Progressive nursery school level and went no further. They took the Progressive nursery's metaphysics literally—and are now wandering in search of a world to fit it.

The hippies' "lifestyle" is an exact concretization of the nursery's ideal: no thought—no focus—no purpose—no work—no reality save the whim of the moment—the hypnotic monotony of primitive music, with the even beat that deadens the brain and the senses—the brotherhood of the pack, combined with pretensions at expressing individuality, at "doing one's thing" in the haze and stench of grimy coffeehouses, which "thing" consists in the monotonous repetition of the same jerking contortions with the same long whine of sounds that had been emitted by others for days on end—the inarticulate extolling of emotions above reason, of "spirituality" above matter, of "nature" above technology—and, above all, the quest for love, anyone's love, any kind of love as the key to finding someone who will take care of them.

Clinging to their nursery ideal, the hippies live down to its essential demand: non-effort. If they are not provided with brightly furnished rooms and toys, they live in dank basements, they sleep on floors, they eat what they find in garbage cans, they breed stomach ulcers and spread venereal diseases—anything rather than confront that implacable enemy of whims: reality.

And out of all those variants of Progressive education's results, out of that spectacle of human self-degradation, there rises a grim, factual, unanswerable proof of the place of reason in man's nature and existence, as a silent warning to all the comprachicos and their allies: You can destroy men's minds, but you will not find a substitute—you can condition men to irrationality, but you cannot make them bear it—you can deprive men of reason, but you cannot make them live with what is left. That proof and warning is: drugs.

The most damning refutation of the theories of all the hippie-activist-Marcusian hordes is the drug-glazed eyes of their members. Men who have found the right way of life do not seek to escape from awareness, to obliterate their consciousness and to drug themselves out of existence. Drug addiction is the confession of an unbearable inner state.

Drugs are not an escape from economic or political problems, they are not an escape from society, but from oneself. They are an escape from the unendurable state of a living being whose consciousness has been crippled, deformed, mutilated, but not eliminated, so that its mangled remnants are screaming that he cannot go on without it.

The phenomenon of an entire generation turning to drugs is such an indictment of today's culture—of its basic philosophy and its educational establishment—that no further evidence is necessary and no lesser causal explanation is possible.

If they had not been trained to believe that belonging to a pack is a moral and metaphysical necessity, would high-school children risk the physical destruction of their brains in order to belong to a pot-smoking “in-group”?

If they had not been trained to believe that reason is impotent, would college students take “mind-expanding” drugs to seek some “higher” means of cognition?

If they had not been trained to believe that reality is an illusion, would young persons take drugs to reach a “higher” reality that seems to obey their wishes, except that they are smashed on pavements in attempting to fly out of windows?

If a trained pack of commentators, sharing the same beliefs, did not glamorize the obscene epidemic of self-destruction—by means of such estimates as “idealistic,” “revolutionary, . . . new life-style,” “new morality,” “drug culture”—would the young have any cover left to hide their own deep-down knowledge that drug addiction is nothing but a public confession of personal impotence?

It is the educational establishment that has created this national disaster. It is philosophy that has created the educational establishment. The anti-rational philosophic trend of the past two hundred years has run its course and reached its climax. To oppose it will require a philosophical revolution or, rather, a rebirth of philosophy. Appeals to “home, church, mother and tradition” will not do; they never did. Ideas can be fought only by means of ideas. The educational establishment has to be fought—from bottom to top, from cause to consequences, from nursery schools to universities, from basic philosophy to campus riots, from without and from within.

This last is addressed to the many intelligent youths who are aware of the state of higher education and refuse to go to college or, having gone, drop out in revulsion. They are playing into the comprachicos' hands. If the better minds desert the universities, this country will reach a situation in which the incompetent and the second-rate will carry the official badge of the intellect and there will be no place for the first-rate and independent to function or even to hide. To preserve one's mind intact through a modern college education is a test of courage and endurance, but the battle is worth it and the stakes are the highest possible to man: the survival of reason. The time spent in college is not wasted, if one knows how to use the comprachicos against themselves: one learns in reverse—by subjecting their theories to the most rigorously critical examination and discovering what is false and why, what is true, what are the answers.

As to the drugged contingents of hippies and activists, I should like to address the following to those among them who may still be redeemable, as well as to those who may be tempted to join their hordes.

The modern comprachicos have an advantage over their ancient predecessors: when a victim was mutilated physically, he retained the capacity to discover who had done it. But when a victim is mutilated mentally, he clings to his own destroyers as his masters and his only protectors against the horror of the state which they have created; he remains as their tool and their play-thing—which is part of their racket.

If, in the chaos of your motives, some element is a genuine desire to crusade in a righteous cause and take part in a heroic battle, direct it against the proper enemy. Yes, the world is in a terrible state—but what caused it? Capitalism? Where do you see it, except for some battered remnants that still manage to keep us all alive? Yes, today's “Establishment” is

a rotted structure of mindless, hypocrisy but who and what is the “Establishment”? Who directs it? Not the big businessmen, who mouth the same collectivist slogans as your professors and pour out millions of dollars to support them. Not the so-called “conservatives,” who compete with your professors in attacking reason and in spreading the same collectivist-altruist-mystic notions. Not the Washington politicians, who are the eager dummies of your professorial ventriloquists. Not the communications media, who publicize your cause, praise your ideals and preach your professors’ doctrines.

It is ideas that determine the actions of all those people, and it is the Educational Establishment that determines the ideas of a nation. It is your professors’ ideas that have ruled the world for the past fifty years or longer, with a growing spread of devastation, not improvement—and today, in default of opposition, these ideas are destroying the world, as they destroyed your mind and self-esteem.

You are miserably helpless and want to rebel? Then rebel against the ideas of your teachers. You will never find a harder, nobler or more heroic form of rebellion. You have nothing to lose but your anxiety. You have your mind to win.

In conclusion, I should like to quote—for one of the guiltiest groups, the parents—a passage from *Atlas Shrugged*, which deals with Rearden’s thoughts after the death of the Wet Nurse:

“He thought of all the living species that train their young in the art of survival, the cats who teach their kittens to hunt, the birds who spend such strident effort on teaching their fledglings to fly—yet man, whose tool of survival is the mind, does not merely fail to teach a child to think, but devotes the child’s education to the purpose of destroying his brain, of convincing him that thought is futile and evil, before he has started to think

“Men would shudder, he thought, if they saw a mother bird plucking the feathers from the wings of her young, then pushing him out of the nest to struggle for survival—yet that was what they did to their children.

“Armed with nothing but meaningless phrases, this boy had been thrown to fight for existence, he had hobbled and groped through a brief, doomed effort, he had screamed his indignant, bewildered protest—and had perished in his first attempt to soar on his mangled wings.”

* * *

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